

Draft minutes of the October 2, 2007 meeting of the Fire/EMS Steering Committee

Attending: Selectman Dore' Hunter (Chair), Don Johnson (Owner's Project Manager), John Murray (Town Manager), Brian Humes (Architect), Art Gagne', Brian Richter (Lieutenant, Fire Department), Charlie Kadlec, Mark Hald (recording), Selectwoman Paulina Knibbe, Robert Craig (Fire Chief), Bob Puffer, Nick Zavolas

DRAFT

Called to order at 7:07 PM

The Chair discussed that the Acton Leadership Group intends to take up the issue of financing this project at its October 15 meeting.

The Architect discussed his meeting with the Design Review Board. The DRB and the Architect discussed that some constraints of the design are because of zoning restrictions at the site. The DRB is concerned about how the building will look from the intersection of Routes 2A and 27. They want the public entrance to face the intersection and the apparatus bays to face Main Street. The DRB wishes to pursue a Renewable Energy Trust Grant (www.masstech.org) that grants money to offset the design, but not construction, of "green" energy systems. The DRB was appreciative that this project was presented to them as early as it was.

The Chair discussed possible changes to the building that would adjust cost to allow some rehabilitation of the existing fire stations, as well as changes to the design of the building to meet the requests of the DRB.

Discussion continued regarding the DRB desire for the building to be physically turned. The sense of this committee is that this is, in fact, a fire station, and that fire stations have bays with large doors, and that there is nothing wrong with the building looking like a fire station does from the perspective of the intersection. Functionality of a building facing south works better in the winter with regard to icing of the driveway. The DRB comments are recommendations, not binding requirements.

Discussion continued regarding space for the shift commander, the public meeting room and the fitness facility being in the new station and how they affect cost. Building façade construction materials were also discussed.

The Town Manager described the importance of the fitness facility. Workers compensation claims reduction. Wellness standards could be worked into labor contracts. The Town is self-insured, and by making sure our employees are proactive about being healthy, we can reduce the costs of the Health Insurance Trust. The fire station containing this facility does not present the security risks that staff-access to the Public Safety Facility fitness room would (weapons and other equipment in the police locker areas).

Lt. Richter discussed the desire of many firefighters to improve their personal physical condition. They have squeezed small equipment into spaces spread throughout the existing stations and frequently use it.

Discussion began about the total cost of the project, and specific concern was raised about the cost per square foot. Mr. Kadlec feels that the anticipated cost of \$5.6 million renders the project politically unviable, and that it would not pass through Town Meeting. Copies of the Space Needs Assessment (dated August 27, 2007) developed by the Architect were handed out. The committee reviewed line-by-line each space need.

The committee removed from the Assessment:

- Public restrooms intended for the recreational areas at the site
- The meeting room and the training aids storage
- Apparatus bays would be reduced to three, as the shift commander will remain in the West Acton station.
- The captain's quarters and shift commander's office
- The quiet study/reference library
- From the fitness room, the Architect will look to see if space savings can be made if the free weights are eliminated – this could bring it down to 300 square feet.

Mr. Johnson estimates a total reduction of 2,265 square feet, keeping a 50 square foot lobby. At \$275 per sq ft, that's a \$623,000 reduction. Using Mr. Johnson's estimate of 12,000 square feet, a quick cost was calculated at \$4,450,000. Mr. Kadlec estimates the square footage remaining is closer to 11,500.

Noting the committee's goal of having a cost estimate from a professional cost estimator, as well as new elevations and design sketches for the State of the Town Meeting (November 13, 2007), the architect asked the committee to endorse this revised Space Needs Assessment. The committee discussed that, if he made the changes as the committee described, it would not need to meet to review the revised Assessment. Chairman Hunter asked if any member objected to the reduction decisions made above; no objections or further reductions were made. The architect agreed to make the changes, e-mail the revised document to the committee and proceed with the design changes as the committee adopted above.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 18, 2007 at 7 PM.

The minutes of the September 18, 2007 meeting were approved without exception.

The meeting adjourned at 9:52 PM.